

CONSERVATION *Showcase*

USDA NRCS
United States Department of Agriculture
Natural Resources Conservation Service
Helping People Help the Land

Convenience Just One Benefit of Feedlot Consolidation Project

By Jason Johnson, December 2011

Luther and Quentin Schutte have more time on their hands now for family, friends and fun. The father-son duo – in the business of fattening up beef cattle and Holstein steers – recently consolidated four open feedlots into one large steel-roofed total containment barn, saving them a few hours a day in commuting and work time.

The Schutte's new 84-foot by 480-foot mega-monoslope building eliminates their 18-mile roundtrip of daily chores throughout Clayton County. Dad Luther Schutte says he feels good about the convenience factor the new facility creates for his son. "Quentin has a young family and this new building will allow him to spend more time with his family," he said. "We can come up here and be done with our work in less than an hour. In the past we'd still be driving somewhere checking cattle."

And time savings is just an "icing on the cake" benefit of their new building. Livestock will also be better protected from weather extremes, manure will be contained and managed much better, and the animals will be more comfortable and will almost certainly gain weight at a higher rate.

Total Manure Containment

Another major reason the Schuttes chose to consolidate their operation into one contained facility was their inability to keep manure from running off their open feedlots. "Manure would runoff into our crop fields," said Luther. "I knew it wasn't good."

To prevent runoff, the Schuttes now scrape manure from the monoslope building floor weekly and haul it to a contained concrete-based manure pit nearby. Then they can apply the manure to their cropland as needed according to a newly implemented comprehensive nutrient management plan (CNMP).



The Schuttes, Luther at left and Quentin at right, utilized funding through the USDA's Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) and the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship's State Revolving Fund (SRF) to help finance their investment.

More Ventilation

Luther Schutte said his cattle struggled with weather extremes in their open feedlots. With only small shelter-like buildings, he was even forced to remove the top of one of the buildings during one summer hot streak to protect his livestock from overheating.

CONSERVATION *Showcase*



The 480-foot steel roofed livestock barn includes six pens that can house up to 150-head.

The new monoslope includes a retractable curtain that allows summer breezes to cool the livestock and provide wind protection during winter.

Better Production

There is little definitive research that indicates contained livestock gain weight at a far greater rate than open feedlot livestock. The Schuttes' moved their cattle into their new home in September 2011, so it's far too early for them to produce any rate of gain conclusions. However, most livestock producers believe it is just common sense that less stressed, more comfortable animals will feed better than animals stressed by extreme weather conditions, sickness, or disease.

Other Features

At more than 40,000 square feet, the Schutte's monoslope is believed to be the largest of its kind in Clayton County. Other features of the building include:

- » six 14 x 80-foot pens with cornstalk bedding. Each pen can hold up to 150-head
- » water drinking tanks that sit between pens, so tanks can be accessed by livestock from either side
- » 18 self-feeding units recycled from the feedlots. The Schuttes saved as much as \$100,000 by using these existing feeders.

Financial and Technical Assistance

The Schuttes received financial and technical assistance through USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) and the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship's Division of Soil Conservation (IDALS-DSC) for the installation of their new building.

Through the NRCS-administered Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP), the Schuttes received a payment at a per-animal rate to build their total containment livestock building. Through EQIP, NRCS provides funding to farmers to install or implement structural and management practices to treat resource concerns on eligible agricultural land.

The Schuttes also received a low-interest loan through the State Revolving Fund (SRF), which includes a handful of water quality loan programs. The Schuttes qualified for the Livestock Water Quality Program (LWQ) for projects that prevent, minimize or eliminate non-point source pollution of Iowa's rivers and streams from animal feeding operations. For more information about the SRF, visit www.iowasrf.com.

For more information about transitioning open feedlots to total containment buildings or about other conservation issues, visit your local NRCS field office.